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Case 24  
England — Churches, &c. — Baptists  
The KENT and SUSSEX

ASSOCIATION OF Partial  
BAPTIST CHURCHES,

CONSISTING of those which meet at *Ashford, Sandhurst, Smarden, Tenterden, Folkestone, and Chatham*, in KENT; and at *Battle, Rye, Wivelsfield, Lewes, Brighton, and Hangleton*, in SUSSEX.

MAINTAINING the important Doctrines of Three equal Persons in the Divine Essence—Eternal, and Personal Election to Holiness here, and Eternal Life hereafter—The original Guilt and Depravity of Mankind—Particular Redemption—Free Justification, by the imputed Righteousness of Christ alone—Effacious Grace in Regeneration, and the perseverance of the Saints to eternal Glory.

ASSEMBLED AT BRIGHTHELMSTON,

The 5th and 6th Days of June, 1792.

BREVIAVES

TUESDAY.

THE Messengers of the Churches met at three o'clock in the Meeting-house, *Watts*; book ii. hymn 74, was sung, and Brother Middleton prayed. The names of the Messengers were then called over, and Brother Atwood was chosen Moderator, and Brother Middleton

A 4175117 Scribe



Scribe. The Moderator read the Preliminaries of the Association, Brother *Vidler* prayed. The Letters from the respective Churches were then read, in which we were happy to find unity, peace, and prosperity : may these blessings increase more and more ! The Churches at *Chatham*, in *Kent*, and at *Handcross* in *Suffex*, proposed to join the Associated Churches of *Kent* and *Suffex*, which was agreed to, and they were unanimously received.

The following question, from the Church at *Lewes*, was debated : *What is that faith which the Scriptures make necessary to Baptism?* and it was determined, in our opinion, that the Scriptures make saving faith necessary to the ordinance of Baptism.

The Moderator concluded this service in prayer, at half past five o'clock.

Public worship began at seven o'clock, and was conducted in the following manner :—Sung, *Watts* i. 144.—Brother *Copping* prayed.—Sung, *Watts* i. 67.—Brother *Arwood*, in the place of Brother *Lloyd* who did not attend, preached from *2 Cor.* viii. 23.—Sung *Watts* i. 10.—Brother *Knott* concluded in prayer.

At ten o'clock business began again. Brother *Purdy* prayed. The Committee of Correspondence read the letter they had been deputed to draw up to the *Charleston Association*, in *America*, together with the answer of that Association. The Committee also read a letter which they had sent to our Brother *Rippon*, of *Landon*. The Associated Ministers and Messengers voted their thanks to the Committee for their attention to the business which had been committed to them ; and the same Brethren, namely, *Purdy*, *Copping*, and *Middleton*, with the addition of Brother *Vidler*, were appointed as a Committee of Correspondence this year.

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#### WEDNESDAY.

THE Ministers and Messengers met at six o'clock, and the Brethren *C. Hooper* and *R. Wood* engaged in prayer. Brother *Purdy* lead the

the Letter which he had been deputed to draw up, which was approved, and ordered to be printed; but as it was much longer than those letters generally are, the farther consideration of the manner of printing it was postponed. The Moderator then concluded in prayer, and adjourned the Assembly at half past eight o'clock.

Public worship began at ten o'clock, and was conducted in the following order:—Sung, *Watts*, p. xvii. L. m.—Brother *Purdy* prayed.—Sung, *Watts* ii. 9.—Brother *Stanger* preached from *Eph.* iv. 15.——Sung, *Watts* ii. 138.—Brother *Wake* concluded in prayer.

The Ministers and Messengers met again for business at two o'clock; a petition from the Baptist Church at *Coggeshall*, in *Essex*, was presented, read, and approved, and was thought worthy of recommendation.

A petition from a poor Brother of the Church at *Wivelsfield*, stating his distressed circumstances, and asking relief of the Churches, was presented, and approved, and eight guineas were immediately collected for him, and paid into the hands of Brother *Terry*, of *Foreft-Rew*.

Brother *Coe* prayed. It was agreed that the general idea of the Association-Fund, should be continued, but on a smaller scale, for another year, for the encouragement of individual Subscribers in the several Churches.

It was agreed that the Circular Letter of this year should be published at two-pence each copy.

It was agreed to recommend to transient Members to join the respective Churches where they dwell, when it is not convenient to fill up their places in their own Churches.

It was agreed to recommend to the Church at *Brightelmston*, not to encourage re-baptizing.

It was agreed that the next Association be held the first Tuesday and Wednesday in June, 1793, at *Chatham*, in *Kent*. Brother

*Middleton*, and Brother *Lloyd* to preach; and, in case of failure, Brother *Kidder*, and Brother *Wake*. Put up at the *Gibraltar Inn*, on the *New Road*.

It was agreed to recommend a monthly Prayer-meeting to all the Churches in this connection, for a revival of religion amongst us.

Brother *Knott* to draw up the next Circular Letter, and the following question was proposed to him, as the subject of it, (in addition to that already on the list:) *What are the signs of the times?*

It was agreed that the first Wednesday in November next, be recommended as a day of fasting and prayer in all the Churches.

A motion was made relative to the reception of excommunicated Members into the Churches, but for want of time, it was referred to the next year.

The Moderator concluded in prayer, and dismissed the Assembly, at six o'clock.

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In the evening Brother *Button*, of *London*, preached a Lecture from *1 Cor. ix. 13.*

The State of the Associated Churches of Kent and Sussex,  
1792.

[Ministers' names are in Italic.]

CHURCHES,	MESSENGERS.	Increase.			Decrease.		
		bpt.	lett.	ref.	djm	exc	dead no.
ASHFORD,	No Messengers,	1					1
RYE,	{ Thomas Purdy, Richard Davis,	7					3
SANDHURST,	{ William Capping, William Mascall,						1
SMARDEN,	Thomas Wake,	4	2	1			1
TENTERDEN,	Richard Wood,				2	1	2
ROTHERFIELD,	{ William Coe, William Adams,	4			1		
WIVELSFIELD,	{ Henry Booker, Joseph Terry, William Knight,				4	2	1
BATTLE,	{ William Vidler, Robert Dadswell,	15					
FOLKSTONE,	{ William Atwood, William Stace,	42			2	2	
LEWES,	{ Joseph Middleton, Thomas Dicker, C. Hooper, John Weller, J. Simes, A. Larwill,				1		3
BRIGHTHELMSTON,	{ Thomas Vine, Alex. Lambert, James Haselgrove	23	6				
BESSEL'S GREEN,	{ John Stanger, John Juden,			3			1
CHATHAM,	{ John Knott, Henry Pullen, William Booth,						60
HANDCROSS,	{ Thomas Huxphrey, John Caffyn, sen.						27
		99	11	3	10	5	16

Increase 82.

Signed in behalf of the Assembly, by

WILLIAM ATWOOD, MODERATOR.

## The CIRCULAR LETTER.

*The Pastors, Ministers, and Messengers, to the several Churches which they represent, send Christian salutation.*

DEARLY BELOVED FRIENDS,

WHETHER we address you as individuals, or unite our voices, talents, and care to serve you: we hope, we have your advantage at heart. It has been customary for some years past to send you an annual letter, but we hope, it is not a mere form of addressing you: but, that we engage in this service, with a design to promote your welfare; to impart some spiritual benefits to you; not as imposing upon you our opinions; but to bring to your view, some part and portion of the great things of God. Indeed we ought not to esteem any thing trivial, which God, in his infinite wisdom, has given us in his word, as the rule of our faith and practice. If any of us think lightly of the words of the Most High, even of such as relate to our civil, domestic, or private duties, it argues a want of knowledge, and reverence of our gracious God. We are not to conclude, we are wise to God, or that we are men of grace, or safe for Heaven, because we have some knowledge of the system of truth, and believe some of the important things in religion. No! But only as our knowledge inflames our hearts to love and honour God, and our faith worketh by love to purify our souls, and enables us, to live on Christ, and bring an obedience to his will.

The Question, Brethren, which comes to you with our Answer and Solution, will not fail to unite doctrine and practice together; and remind you, that the remedy provided by divine grace was not to destroy, but to establish the law, provide for its being magnified by Christ, and its being obeyed and delighted in, by his believing children after the inner man. Rom. vii. 23, 25.

The Question that will now be answered, is: *What is the scriptural view of the covenants of works and grace?* This is a very weighty question, as our Lord said in regard to love, so say we on this double question, on it hangs all the holy writings. We have

have involved in it the four-fold state of man : his sinless perfection, his fall, his recovery, and his eternal happiness.

But before we directly answer the question, as it respects the law as a covenant of works : we beg leave to consider, and point out to you, Dear Brethren, a few things, which may be of use to us, to assist our judgments and yours in the right understanding of the covenant of works.

As, first, That a law, (yea the moral law) must have subsisted between a rational creature and God, had there never been a covenant of works between God and man. Impossible that a rational creature can be without law to God ; there must be a rule of right to direct his walk with God ; a rule that points out evil, or wrong, to guard him against it. We know that there is a law, and rule, in respect to man : but what we plead for is, it cannot be otherwise ; a rational creature can have no existence in God's creation without law. The worst of absurdites would arise from such a proposition, to confound our very reason, even to suppose any rational creature, in any possible state in earth or heaven, in time or eternity, as lawless, or without rule or law to God, would be an insult on God's moral government ; introduce misrule and disorder, and set aside subordination to his Majesty. We do most cordially beseech you, beloved brethren, to pay attention to this distinction, between the law as a covenant of works, and the law as a rule of life. This just rule of our walk of love to God, and love to our neighbour, will not only engage, by the influence of grace, the hearts of all the saints below, but will fill the hearts of all the saints in glory for ever. It will there be drawn forth to sinless perfection. Men will for ever hate evil, and for ever delight in truth and holiness. And divine-grace, now engages the saints to delight in the law of God after the inner man. *Rom. vii. 22.*

Secondly, The law of nature, or the moral law of God, prior to any covenant of works, was equal with Adam's existence, he was made in the image of God, as it respected knowledge, and moral rectitude. The law was written in his heart and nature, as it was afterwards in the heart of Christ. He was formed with a love to God, and whatever was good, and with a hatred to evil, before the covenant

venant of works was entered into. And believers in Jesus, in their new creation, are formed into the image of God, have the law written in their hearts : and though freed from it, as we shall shew, as a covenant of works, still formed to be obedient thereunto as a rule of moral conduct.

Thirdly, The moral law, so far as it is suited to the nature of angels, must have been between God and them, not only, as to an union of its moral maxims with their nature, but also as drawn forth into a rule of their conduct ; for where there is no law, there is no transgression. The punishment of fallen angels must have proceeded on this ground, their violating and departing from this perfect rule of their conduct : their breaking from their allegiance to God, and committing treason against his authority. And we judge, that the angels of heaven, are under such a law of nature : a law, great, holy, and good, even the moral law, so far as it is suited to their nature, as the eternal rule of their conduct. We suppose it makes their happiness double, to see their standing secured, and confirmed in Christ, by an immutable decree. But this decree doth not destroy the law between them and their God ; they are still under the law to worship God, to do his pleasure, to serve, love, and honour him, and are for ever crying out Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. But none of the angels were ever under the law as a covenant, God never made any covenant of works with them. It must, however, be admitted, that this law of nature, the moral law, under which every rational creature is placed by God ; if a deviation from it, or a transgression of its holy precepts, by such a rational being is committed, such a transgression exposes the guilty to punishment, without any consideration of a covenant of works annexed to the moral precepts.

Fourthly, Further, Brethren, as to the law published on *Sinai*, we consider it as a copy of the law of nature, or the law which was given to Adam, methodised, delivered out, and written in ten words or commandments—And all the enlargements since added, in the Prophets, and the New Testament founded upon it, and taken into the same rule : the whole being a copy of God's most holy will and pleasure. One great use of publishing of it, was, to make it to be better understood, that man might more easily detect his conduct, to leave

leave him without excuse, and charge home his guilt. *Paul* tells us, it was to stop mens' mouths, and that all the world may become guilty before God.—*Rom.* iii. 19. And that the law entered that the offence might abound: not that men should sin more, but more justly stand convicted: and being sensible of sin, fly from *Sinai*, to *Christ* on Mount *Zion*.

Fifthly. But, Brethren, we do not understand, that the law published on *Sinai* with so much terror and majesty, to have been published, and given to the people of *Israel*, in the form of the old covenant of works made with our first parent: For though the law published on *Sinai*, and wrote on tables of stone, was as to the substance of it, the same as the law of the covenant of works: yet not published and given to the *Jews* as the covenant of works, for them to live under as such: but published and given to them with the writings of *Moses*: as a covenant made with that very people; and as a rule for them to walk by. For let it be observed, that all the *Jews* were put under the *Sinai* covenant, *Moses*, *Joshua*, and all the Prophets, believers and unbelievers. We are very certain, that believers in *Christ*, in the Jewish Church, were not under the covenant of works, if so they must have stood accursed, but they were blessed, and freed from the curse, pardoned, and justified before God: and yet continued under the *Sinai* covenant, and the moral law, in that dispensation as the rule of life.

Secondly. We do not deny, that some things in the *Sinai* covenant, bear some likeness to the covenant of works: as it required obedience, on pain of forfeiting God's blessing and protection in their favoured land; and as God also denounced threats on their disobedience, as of the plague, pestilence, famine, sword, and death, so far it was a conditional covenant, but not the covenant of works, for that must have excluded salvation from the Jewish Church, which was not the case. The Jewish covenant was rather a legal dispensation of the covenant of grace;

Thirdly. Should it be asked, to what purpose, then, was the moral law, introduced, into the Jewish covenant, and mixed with that dispensation? In answer, we say, to teach them the knowledge of sin, and its damning nature, to set before them a plain copy of

God's will, to convict them of evil, and to shew them their duty to God and each other, and to be a perpetual rule of life to them.

The law on tables of stone, deposited in the Ark, was a law in the hand of their Merciful Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: it was of that use to believers then, as it is to Christ's freed men now, who are far enough from being under the law as a covenant of works; ye are redeemed from the curses of it, *Gal. iv. 5.* But still under this holy law to Christ, as a law of liberty and not of bondage, to serve it, with the mind and with the body also, which they do, when they live like Christ, and copy after his example, *Rom. vii. 22, 25.* *1 John ii. 6.*

Again, we can but wish to remind you, Brethren, as it may not a little assist you, to form a scriptural idea of the law as a covenant of works; that in many places in the New Testament where mention is made of the law, the old covenant, the commandment, and of carnal ordinances, and the hand writing of ordinances; that the inspired penmen cannot have the moral law in view, no, nor yet the law, as the covenant of works, not in *Acts xv. 5, 10.*—nor in the allegory of Paul in *Gal. iv. 21, to 28.*—nor in *Eph. ii. 15. Col. ii. 14. Heb. vii. 16. to 19. Heb. viii. 7, 8, 9, 10.* In the first of these places, the law of Moses, called a yoke of bondage, the ceremonial law is evidently intended: for Peter stirs up the disciples, to a regard for the moral law, by advising them to abstain from fornication. And in the allegory of Hagar and Sarah, he means, the two covenants: the covenant of Sinai, and the covenant of grace; if Paul had had the covenant of works in his view, he would have led us up to Adam, but he carries us back no further than Sinai. And as to Christ's abolishing in his flesh, the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, and his blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances, mentioned in *Eph. ii. 15. Col. ii. 14.* This cannot be understood of the moral law. He has not blotted out any moral precept, or abolished any just and holy commandment in the eternal law of nature: far be that from the Lord. Rather as it respects his saved people, he has only blotted out their sins and debts, and taken away all charges from the law, by satisfying all its demands. Here are precepts and ordinances blotted out, but they are the carnal ones of the ceremonial law. And in the seventh of *Hebrews,*

*Hebrews*, it is easy to observe, *Paul* has reference to the law of the Levitical priesthood, contrasted with the priesthood of *Christ*, and the two covenants mentioned in the next chapter, the old covenant made with the Jewish nation, (not with *Adam*) and the new, the covenant of grace.

Besides, Brethren, many of these expressions would be exceedingly improper to be applied to the law of nature, or the law of the covenant of works: there are no carnal commandments or carnal ordinances in the moral law, or in the law as a covenant of works. The law is spiritual, holy, just, and good, and the covenant of works is founded on holiness, justice, and truth. Indeed, we have to bless God, that *Christ* is the end of the law, as to a justifying righteousness to them that believe. He has fulfilled it as to an endless life, disarmed it of its terror, and believers, are delivered from its penalties as a covenant of works. It is to them as a dead husband, whose power over his wife ceaseth at his death. So, the covenant of works ceaseth to have dominion over the people of God, by the body of *Christ*, saith the Apostle: And believers, who are married to *Christ*, are no adulteresses nor antinomians, who plead their freedom from the covenant of works, and are espoused to the Lord *Jesus*. See *Rom.* ix. 14. Our view in leading you to distinguish between the law as a rule of life, and the law as a covenant of works: is to stir you up with becoming zeal for God, to bid defiance to a proposition, that is an insult on God's moral government, that believers have nothing to do with the law as a rule of life. What! because *Christ* has obeyed it to an endless life, and freed his believing children from its penalties, as to an endless death, are they to have no regard to its holy precepts, or be under no obligation, to serve their gracious sovereign, agreeably to his just commands? We hope better things of you, though we thus speak.

Having set aside some difficulties, and made our way plain, to give the scriptural view of a covenant of works between God and man, we now assert, that the law of the covenant of works, in the genuine scriptural sense of the term is, an agreement, a league or contract, between God and man, in his state of innocence: on the part of God, a promise of an endless life, to *Adam* and his posterity, upon his perfectly obeying God's holy law: with a threat-

ning of death in every view of it on his disobedience. And on the part of man, a cordial approval of the terms, who must with delight, have subscribed with heart and hand, to every article in this compact; saying, I delight to do thy will, O my God! thy law is in mine heart. And this is properly called the covenant of works, because it is established, on man's obedience as the procuring cause of the blissful life promised; and his disobedience, as the procuring cause of the death threatened.

Secondly. We say, then, that the moral law given to Adam with the preceding agreement, is the covenant of works. And further, this covenant of works, was not entered into with Adam, simply as in his own person, but as the federal head of his posterity. And here, let it be observed, that on this subject, we use the word, *federal*, as relating to a league, contract or covenant. Here as we said, God the Sovereign on the one part, making a promise of a blissful life, (we will not say of heaven, though eternal life is certainly intended) and it may be a more exalted state, than that he was then in,—to him and his posterity, on condition of his perfectly keeping the whole law of God.—And the Good Lord gave to *Adam* a visible sign or symbol, (we will not say a seal, though as good as a seal) of the happiness promised to him and his posterity, on condition of his sinless obedience, in the tree of life placed in the midst of the garden. A most engaging incitement to obedience: a constant remembrancer, a pleasing pledge of the kindness of his God: and also a token of the pleasing regard his God would shew to his spotless obedience. The other part of this covenant, contained a just threatening, of death to himself, and of ruin and death to his posterity, in case he failed to obey so good and just a law.—Of this punishment on his disobedience, God gave him likewise a visible sign or symbol: and as a trial of his integrity, in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A remembrancer, that continually held out a warning to him:—A voice from God sounding in his ears; a vision presented to his eyes—Behold in me, this dreadful doom, if thou touch or eat.

Thirdly. That this agreement, or covenant of works was made with *Adam*, as a federal head in justice and equity, as worthy of God and consonant to the rights of innocent man, appears plain: As it was established,

established, on the moral perfections of God: and on his moral government, over his rational innocent creature.—It breathes nothing but holiness, it asks for nothing but purity, love to and delight in God: its authority, demands only a reasonable service: that may be just, holy, and good—and only punishes treason against the Sovereign. We must say, the dispensation of the covenant of works, was truly worthy of God. The terms were infinitely just and righteous, such as a just God, could not dispense with, without giving up his right of governing: this was the pure language of God, to our federal head, *Adam*: Obey and live, you and yours—obey and you are entitled to live for ever.—My rectitude binds me to fulfil my word—to preserve to you unalienable the reward of your obedience: you shall have the inheritance promised without diminution, in the most ample manner. But disobey, and die, suffer my just vengeance, due to your crimes. He that doth God's commandments shall live by them, *Rom.* viii. 8. But the soul that sins shall die. *Eph.* xviii. 4.

Thirdly. To form a true idea of a just covenant, as this is, one of the covenanters is not to be forced into the bargain or compelled to contract;—unless justice, equity, and right call him to the engagement, as they do here. Still we must assert, *Adam* entered at freely, as justly into this covenant of works, for himself and posterity. The sinless perfection of his nature, must have made it a delight to him to obey God: hence his willingness to fulfil the condition as to perfect obedience; he could not wish it less, as he then was: he must have had a competent knowledge of evil, and have understood the justice of the threatened punishment. His heart being all unison with God, all the terms in this covenant, doubtless, had his hearty Amen. And if nothing more appeared on man's part, it authorises us to say this was a covenant of works between God and man. And we may here suppose man saying: O my eternal God, I love thee too well ever to offend against thee—All that that thou hast commanded, thy servant will joyfully perform. But, Brethren, he fell! and we all fell in him!

But, Fourthly. A question may be asked, Where do you find this covenant in Scripture? We own there was a law of works given to *Adam*: But where do the Scriptures call it a covenant of works?

Others

Others may say, what need was there of its being a covenant of works, or of either God or man covenanting. Had not God, the sovereign of his creature, a right to his obedience, and a right to punish disobedience: had man any other right, but to obey and be happy, or disobey and be miserable? This last observation is very true, and we can add, to the honour of our first parent, that he did not want it to be otherwise, that he highly approved of the sovereignty of God over him, and as highly approved of the alternatives of the law as to life and death, and most sweetly submitted to the authority and righteousness therein displayed, for his very happiness centred in God, nor could it be otherwise without depravity which as yet he knew nothing of. But all this doth not militate one jot against the law as a covenant of works. In answer to the above query, we say, that there was something more took place, than God's saying, obey and live, and disobey and die. The scriptures of truth clearly evince some holy conference between God and man, some proposals and terms on God's side: and surely *Adam* did not act with sullen silence; his will, his affections, and probably his tongue uttered his mind, and made answer to God's propositions: to these I submit my self, and my posterity. This will appear in the second of *Genesis*; and from the two trees in the garden, and the law annexed to them; with very little attention, it is easy to perceive they were not to adorn the garden, nor for man's natural use; but planted there as symbolical, and on a religious account, to assist him in the matters of his God: both as to comfort and warning, and for the trial of his integrity.

But that which must fully determine our judgment on the federal headship of *Adam*,—and of the law as a covenant of works, is first, the universal condemnation of *Adam's* posterity, by his eating the forbidden fruit. The Apostle in *Rom.* v. 18. says, “*By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men, so condemnation.*” The justice of this condemnation, cannot be fairly maintained, without considering our first parent a covenant head to his posterity, the law laying us under a premunire, or penalty of death for his first sin, being considered in the eye of the law as having sinned in him.

*Equally clear is the Apostle in the whole of that passage, in Rom. v. from 12 to 19, in representing Adam and his posterity, and Christ and*

and all his people. Both *Adam* and *Christ* are set forth as covenant heads, the former is said to be a figure of the latter, v. 12. by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. That is, that all have sinned in the eye of the law, and considered as guilty of death, and under the sentence of it, by the imputation of *Adam's* sin. To them the words are not literally true in any other sense ; for our new-born infants have not personally sinned ; but they sinned in *Adam* as their covenant head.

Again, v. 14. Death reigned from *Adam* to *Moses* over them that had not sinned, after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression, that had not committed actual sin. This cannot be understood of adults, who have sinned as he did, but of our new-born infants, who by *Adam's* crime, were involved in condemnation and obnoxious to death. In this whole passage we find that the whole of our race are said to be exposed to death ; that they are dead ; that judgment came upon them to condemnation. Death reigns over them, and they are all made sinners, and that by imputation.

Fifthly. Some may cavil at God's making *Adam* a covenant head to his posterity, and for putting our lives and inheritance in trust with him : but this, brethren, we believe is without any just cause, nay, a reflection on the wisdom and righteousness of God. Could we have been in council, we judge, we should have agreed, to have given our high Father the honour of being our trustee. And should have highly applauded the wisdom of God, and also *Adam's* integrity, had he conveyed the blessing of a happy life to us. And as it is, God's perfections are unimpeachable. We have all reason to say, it was just, it was kind in God to enter into a covenant with man : and to assure him that endless life should be the reward of his obedience. This was most worthy of God, most equitable and good in him. And as he added a sign and pledge to his promise in the tree of life : it could not but be highly pleasing to man. And as he had sufficient power to keep God's law, and a matchless delight in God to do it ; his sin was of himself, his punishment the just fruit of his sin, and God is clear. 'Tis right we are brought to lament our ruin : and as there is provision made by God in Christ for

man's

man's recovery, godly lamentation is a leading step to enjoy eternal salvation.

Sixthly. The whole race of mankind are generated into the world, under this broken covenant, as the offspring of the first man, their being shaped in iniquity and born unclean, proclaims it. And all who in an unregenerate state, and as unbelievers, are declaratively under this covenant, and so under its curse. For as many as are of the works of the law, are under its curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. And he that believeth not, is condemned already. The terms in this are always the same: obey perfectly, or die eternally. He that doeth these things shall live by them. The soul that sins shall die. See Gal. iii. 10. John iii. 18. Rom. ix. 3.

And though man, by his fall, hath lost his strength to keep the law, God has not lost his power, nor the law its force or authority. No allowance can be made or indeed given to man to do amiss. If he fails but in one point of the law, the law is broken, and charges the guilty sinner with a breach of the whole. True and awful as these things are, fallen man is still thinking he can retrieve his loss, and recover life, and the favour of God by his good deeds: his ignorance and pride buoy him up with flattering hopes that he can yet make up the breach between God and his soul; though he is every day adding sin to sin, yet he will not allow that he is an enemy to God. But this is all deception: justice cannot be bribed: God cannot connive at sin: wisdom cannot be imposed upon: neither can justice give up its rights, or the law its demands: it is the ministration of death to guilty man. Nothing but an interest in the second Adam's obedience, sufferings, and satisfaction can insure a sinner's salvation.—If any in reading this letter, fare made to tremble, and to cry out for mercy, confessing their ruined state, the other part of the question proposed, namely, an explanation of the covenant of grace, holds out a precious remedy, for it is a covenant, not made with fallible man, but with Jesus Christ, man's almighty Saviour.

Having

Having represented to you, dear brethren, a description of the covenant of works, in this epistle, permit us now to lay before you what the Scriptures say concerning the covenant of grace:—this a league, contract or agreement entered into by the divine persons in the Godhead; the Father, Son, and Spirit, in the eternal council of heaven, (*Zech.* vi. 13. *Psi.* lxxxix. 1, 2. *Psi.* xxv. 1.) respecting the salvation of the vessels of mercy; in which covenant, a plan is drawn, and means devised for a complete release from sin and misery: grace in time, and glory in the world to come: a covenant ordered in all things and sure, which is all their salvation, and all their desire, *2 Sam.* xxiii. 5.

**F**irst. This covenant of grace is made with elect persons, in *Christ* their Surety and Mediator. These persons have, in the covenant of grace, as all mankind had, in the covenant of works, a representative, and federal head; and this head is *Christ*. He is a head to his church in a variety of senses, as may be seen in the following scriptures: *Isa.* ix. 6. *John* x. 10. xiv. 6. *Eph.* iv. 15, 16. v. 23. and *Col.* ii. 19. but what we mean more particularly is the federal headship of *Christ* over his people. In no other way that we can conceive, could we enjoy, from his obedience and death, the blessings of justification, pardon, and salvation. It is only by his being a covenant-head to his people, and standing in their law place, that what he did and suffered could be considered in the same light as if they had done and suffered these things in their own persons; for the law acquits them, and accounts them righteous, in this way, *Rom.* viii. 3, 4. And this headship of *Christ* could not arise from the nature of God, nor any natural order of things between God and man. *Christ's* mediatorial office was certainly grounded on the sovereign good will and pleasure of *Jehovah*, settled and agreed upon between the divine three, as the contracting parties; otherwise it might have been an establishment of necessity, as arising from the nature, or personality of God. This, brethren, is what will lead us to unfold the riches of grace in the salvation of sinners.

**S**econdly. We have the fullest evidence in the scriptures of truth, that such a covenant has been entered into by the Father and *Christ*, in which the latter was set up as the federal head, *Isa.* xlvi. 6, 7. *Jehovah*, the Father here declares to the Son: “I the Lord, have

"called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will  
 "keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light  
 "to the *Gentiles*; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners  
 "out of the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-  
 "house." The like things are said in chapter xlix. 1, to ro. *Pf.*  
*xlv.* and *Pf.* lxxxix. 28, 34. Here, brethren, we see the early  
 designs of the grace of God! how kind his thoughts! how wise and  
 gracious, all his proceedings!

Thirdly. The very names of *Christ*, and every office sustained  
 by him, clearly display this compact: the whole of which originates  
 in his covenant headship: his being a surety and mediator arise from  
 agreement: his being a brother or redeemer arises from stipulation:  
 his being the life, light, and refuge of his people: their wisdom,  
 righteousness, sanctification and redemption, have their foundation  
 in the covenant of grace. His being a Prophet to teach, a Priest to  
 atone, a King to rule, all arise from this covenant agreement. These  
 offices and names do not arise out of the nature or personality of  
 God; nor the sonship of Christ, for he would have been the Son  
 of God, if he had never been a mediator. The whole of these spring  
 from an act of grace: an act of the sovereign good will and pleasure  
 of God. From hence, brethren, we may learn, that the covenant  
 of grace, is a wise agreement entered into by God towards man, to  
 save him with an everlasting salvation.

Fifthly. The conduct of the Father towards *Christ* constrains  
 us to assert, that the covenant of grace is an agreement, a stipulation,  
 a contract; otherwise, what should we think of the Father's laying  
 our sins on *Christ*: his bruising him, and putting him to pain for the  
 crimes of others? To punish the innocent for the guilty, as was the  
 case here, would make both angels and men think themselves unsafe  
 under the government of God; but *Christ's* covenanting to become  
 a surety, sets this matter in a clear light, and vindicates the justice of  
 God's proceedings towards our Lord *Jesus Christ*. *Christ* voluntarily  
 standing in our Law-place, took our debts upon him, and became ac-  
 countable for our disobedience; and thus, by his stripes we are  
 healed.

Sixthly. We may add, that the parties covenanting to redeem and  
 save men, were equal: *Christ* thought it no robbery to be equal  
 with

with God. His right to stipulate for man's salvation, is undeniably, and that he did so is evident; he entered into this covenant freely; made himself accountable for his people's transgressions; and as freely and faithfully made the demanded satisfaction. And as God could have been under no obligation to save sinners, their salvation must be of grace. The Father provided a sacrifice for sin, in the person of Christ—Jesus engaged to make atonement, and he bled on the accursed tree for that purpose. O the depth, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Seventhly. The Holy Spirit was a contracting party in this covenant; he agreed to perform his part in the salvation of man; the scriptures abundantly testify this. The Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ: the Spirit of God's Son, Gal. iv. 6. We judge that the Spirit is not so called from his oneness in nature with the Father and the Son, not as it respects his personality, but purely in relation to the covenant of grace. His being called the Spirit of adoption must allude to his office in the covenant of grace. The characters of the divine spirit, which he bears towards the vessels of mercy, do not arise from his nature or personality as God, but from his engagements in the covenant of grace, as is evident by his being called a teacher, a comforter, a sealer, and a sanctifier of the people of God. The Spirit, doubtless, took upon himself, agreed, and covenanted, to be possessed of these offices; and he performs his engagements in regenerating, teaching, comforting, sanctifying, and leading God's people into all truth.

Eighthly. Nothing can be more solemn, than the manner of covenanting with Christ about the salvation of sinners. Formerly, covenants were confirmed by oaths and imprecations, slaying of animals, and cutting them in twain, and so passing between the parts, Gen. xv. 9—12. Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19. God says, my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips; once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie to David, (that is Christ) his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me, Ps. lxxxix. 34. The like promise and oath are mentioned by the Apostle Paul, Heb. vi. 17, 18.

Nothing can be more wise than the terms agreed upon in this covenant of grace, and the conditions to be performed by the covenanting parties: on the Father's part, preparing *Christ* a body, to offer as a sacrifice for sin, *Heb.* x. 5. Hence the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, *John* i. 14. Again, the Father furnished the human nature of *Christ*, with gifts to execute his Mediatorial office, *Isa.* xi. 2, 3. *Luke* iv. 18. The Father engages to support and be with *Christ*, while he was performing his will on earth. *Christ* having finished his work of suffering, was raised from the dead by the Father, *Gal.* i. 1. The human nature of *Christ* is exalted by the Father, to his own right hand, and all power in heaven, and on earth is given to him, *Matt.* xxviii. 18. The rule and administration of God's universal kingdom are put into his hand, and he is constituted the judge of quick and dead. As *Christ* was the executor of the plan of salvation, it was necessary, and highly reasonable, that all this glory should be annexed to his office, as the great head of his church, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Though *Jesus* suffered much, he lost nothing by his sufferings; justice has highly rewarded his work in the pre-eminence which he has over all things. It was said of him, that he should see (the fruit) of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, which he now does, in the many which are with him; and shall do as to the rest. What admirable justice, truth, and faithfulness has the Father shewn to our covenant head *Christ*, and will shew to his covenant people! Admire his goodness, O ye Saints, and praise him for his saving kindness!

Tenthly. The terms agreed upon by *Christ*, on his part, and which he has faithfully performed, warrants us to say, that what is a covenant of grace to us, was a covenant of works to *Christ*. For he engaged to be the surety of his people; he engaged his heart to draw nigh to God for them, *Jer.* xxx. 21. He was made under the law, as a broken covenant; as the second *Adam*, he engaged to fulfil the law, which he did by his obedience unto death, and he thus brought in an everlasting justifying righteousness; he engaged to redeem his people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, *Gal.* iii. 13. iv. 4, 5. He engaged to keep all those who were committed into his hands, and that none should be lost, *Matt.* xviii.

28iii. 3. *John x. 27, 28.* He engaged to present all his people faultless before his Father, which will be done in his own due time, when he hath raised them from the dead. Upon his fulfilling these conditions the Father promised the Spirit to prepare all the vessels of mercy for heaven. The four Evangelists will inform you, brethren, how well our Lord *Jesus Christ* performed the conditions of this covenant : How sweetly he preached glad tidings ! What numerous miracles he wrought ! Full of acts of goodness to men ! Incessant in prayer ! Every precept of the divine law, was written on his holy heart, and was to be read in his spotless life ! How readily he went to *Jerusalem* to die for his people ! How lovingly did he shed his blood for the remission of their sins ! How completely he finished his work ! Sing, O heavens ! Be joyful, O earth ! Clap your hands, ye people ! Salvation, and honour, and glory, be unto God and the Lamb for ever and ever ! The glory of the divine perfections shines divinely bright, in the salvation of un-numbered millions of our fallen race ! A subject which shall for ever fill their hearts with joy, and their tongues with endless praise to the grace of God ! The promises which hold forth this grace, are as so many suns, to illuminate, cheer and direct our way to the kingdom.

Eleventhly. The covenant of grace may be considered as a *Testament*, and it is so called of *Christ*, and the Apostle *Paul*, as containing a gift or legacy, which is salvation, grace, and glory, founded on the death of *Christ* the testator. This testament was drawn up in the counsel of God, and confirmed by oaths and promises ; in which the Almighty Father, possessed his Son, *Jesus Christ*, in the beginning of his way, and made over to him an inheritance of grace and glory, which his elect should share as joint-heirs with him for ever and ever.

Having given you, dear brethren, a brief view of the two covenants, let us now, in conclusion, consider the excellency of this establishment of grace in its influence upon the heart.

The covenant of grace, published in the gospel, vindicates the honour of God ; for in the belief of this, we find the most shining characters in all ages of the world ; a long list of which is made out by the Apostle *Paul*, (*Heb. xi.*) all men of faith. How faint and superficial

superficial are the virtues and morals of the wisest heathens, to the shining virtue, and heavenly deeds of these men of God ! Mere moral virtue never carries the mind above the world, but grace gives spiritual life and wisdom, not of this world : by this the most secret sins are detested, old things pass away, and, behold, all things become new ! Holy brethren, may we all be united to praise God, for our deliverance from the covenant of works, and for an interest in the covenant of grace ; but let us be aware that we do not oppose *Christ*, in a proper use of the law, under the gospel dispensation : he makes good use of it for conviction, for reproof, and for direction. He holds it up as a glass for us to see our daily imperfections in, that we may more quickly apply to him for cleansing and recovery. Labour therefore, brethren, to use the law, as *Christ* has stated it in his word.

Let it be further observed, that God never designed by the covenant of grace, and in giving salvation to men, to set aside maxims of justice, or to cast down any rule of right, or to subvert the universal law of nature. We bless God, that through divine grace, he has given us the pardon of our sins, and establishment in *Christ*, that we might be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.

Dear brethren, we wish even your perfection ; may you indeed be blessed with a clear judgment, to discern the excellencies of gospel truth ! May your zeal be fervent, for the glory of God, and for each others good ! May you ever ascribe the whole of your salvation to God, and hate every false way ! May you do honour to your principles by your moderation, godly tempers, and humble deportment ; and by a steady, and zealous attendance on the means of grace !

We again beseech you, brethren, to make the most diligent inquiry after the seal of this covenant upon your own hearts : the ratification or seal of the covenant to us, was the blood of *Christ* ; but as this is a secret thing as to the persons redeemed, and known only to God, it cannot be the confirmation of their interest in *Christ*. But that which is the seal or confirmation of our interest in the covenant, is our receiving the Holy Spirit : his regenerating our souls, and

and writing the laws of God in our hearts : his becoming the spirit of adoption, and giving us light, life and liberty.

Finally, dear brethren, in the Lord, we wish you to distinguish true religion from that which is false. It certainly does not consist in a working for life—in a dead, unfruitful faith—in an historical knowledge of the covenant of grace. It does not consist in crying up the liberty of the gospel, to fright duty out of doors. It consists no more in empty knowledge, than in do and live. The high-flown professor of grace, whose heart is not right with God, is as much under condemnation, as the openly profane sinner, and his state more dreadful. True religion appears in its fruits : in men's having tender consciences : a broken heart, and a contrite spirit : in a holy hatred of sin : a deep sense of our unworthiness : filled with admiring of Jesus the Saviour, and living upon his fulness daily :—these things proclaim us legatees in the covenant of grace, and prove us to be the children of the living God. We remain, your affectionate brethren in the Lord.

*Signed in behalf of the whole, by*

THOMAS PURDY.

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